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THE BATTLE
OF THE
SACRED BOOKS.

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The Battle of the Sacred Books.

"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."—Isaiah xi. 9.

I. It was in a day of peril and death the Seer beheld the uprising of the new shoot from the stock of Jesse, endued with an endless life, adorned with a fruitfulness increasing from age to age, until the whole world should be filled with its benefits.

The serried battalions of Assyria threatened the enfeebled people of Judah and Jerusalem with utter extinction. Zion mourned. Her sons and daughters trembled. Her statesmen were paralysed. Her soldiers were cowed. But to the vision of the prophet the gathered hosts were as the trees of a forest; dried and waiting for the out-flashing of the Light of Israel which should consume them so completely that a child might count the remnant. And out of this ancient people, on whom the boastful Sennacherib was descending, One should come Who would inaugurate a reign of peace and right; gentle in its strength; beautiful in its security, and universal in its range: "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

The conditions are typical. God's prophets see the best issues when things are at their worst. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," is their message to troubled men who love God and seek His face. Isaiah's psalms are chanted in Judah's darkest days. The fourteenth of John grows near, if not in, the Garden of Gethsemane. "Men learn in suffering what they teach in song." The literature that inspires and heals the world is the creation of "men of sorrow and acquainted with grief." The most pathetic strains are wafted from unsubduable souls

through prison roofs. Out of the menaces of men come the promises of God. As

“Only a prism’s obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white,
So may a glory from defect arise.”

II. Therefore may I not say it is fortunate for us, who are charged with the task of preaching the Gospel of Jesus to every creature, that whatever may have been possible to our predecessors we can neither ignore the difficulties of our vocation, nor disguise the weakness of our forces. The enormous strength of the gigantic religious and social systems of the world is disclosed to us as it never was to our fathers. We have surrendered the juvenile prejudice that the victories of Mahommedanism are all due to the sword, and that the sway of Islam over millions is only obtained by the assumption of a divine sanction for immorality. We see that when we are on the eve of the greatest missionary expansion of all time; the GREAT MISSIONARY BOOK,—called by Rénan “the Great Book of the consolation of Humanity,” is thrust into the burning fiery furnace of European criticism; and at a time when Literature offers to become one of the most effective agents in the distribution of ideas, and the transmission of moral forces, there is not only a growing distrust of the Scriptures, as the final book for the Race; but the confidence of the younger men and women, in and about our churches, in their integrity, uniqueness, and availableness for all the practical needs of life, is placed in grave danger. The Sun of the Knowledge of the Lord is threatened with eclipse at the moment when we expected its beams to rise with healing over all the nations of the earth. “And so,” the Church may say with Browning—

“I live you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer—still struggling—to effect

My warfare ; happy that I can
 Be crossed and thwarted as a man :
 Not left in God's contempt apart,
 With ghastly smooth life dead at heart."

III. For we share the Prophet's hope, and are possessed and swayed by his invincible faith. The final issue is clear. The Word of the Lord will endure for ever. The Best must live. The Absolute Best will live longest. These Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are the ultimate form of the written revelation of the Eternal Father to the race, and therefore this Bible is destined to become the Sacred Book of Humanity. The earth shall be *full* of the knowledge of the Lord. "It will come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house—"the place of His special revealings"—shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and ALL nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths ; FOR out of Zion shall go forth the law—the instruction—and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." We never dream that this marvellous story of the most marvellous religion will become superannuated, and men will cease to listen to the majestic music of its thrilling strains ; to feed on its nourishing and strengthening ideas ; to seek the inspiration and moral momentum of its principles ; to crave its clear and exalted maxims for conduct, or to gaze on its full-orbed revelation of God the Father—suffering in Christ to save man, His child—forgiving iniquity, renewing the conviction of the supremacy of righteousness ; bringing men into the love of Himself and of all men, and so creating a new heavens and a new earth. We have heard of the last of the worshippers of Odin, and even of the last of the Romans ; but we are sure men will never hear of the

last of the Christians, or of the last student of the knowledge of the Lord contained in this Divine Library of the Hebrew people!

IV. But you will be ready to ask, on what does a faith like that stand? Has it a basis in fact and experience? Can it be defended by reason and flawless logic?

I think it is Dean Stanley who insinuates that the Englishman's conviction that the Bible contains the ultimate form of the religion of man has reached us by the line of inheritance. We are the people of the Bible. It has made us. In it we live and move and have our being. We owe our rank amongst the nations to its expanding ideas and creative force. Our superiority is its gift, our conscious power its inspiration, and therefore we readily believe that the Book which has wrought in us so mightily and beneficently must play a supreme part in determining the life of all other peoples; and since we cannot think of our own defeat, so we are incapable of imagining that in the impending conflict of sacred literatures, that which has triumphed so conspicuously and so completely, is doomed at last to fall.

I will not deny that in some cases this faith in the victory of the Book is only a consequence of our inherited expectation of the strength of the Anglo-Saxon race; but surely, for most of us, this is to set the facts in an order the reverse of experience. If we believe in the ascension of the Anglo-Saxon to primacy in the education of the world, it is because we also believe in the saving, cleansing, and life-multiplying power of the Book; and are sure that so long as we are men of this book—illuminated by its ideas, guided by its laws, and inspired by its missionary spirit, we cannot possibly fall into the rear of the most progressive nations. We have inherited its unquenchable hope, and accepted, as a certain reality, its beautiful *Utopia*, a world regenerated by the knowledge of the Lord. The Psalmist's prayer is ours, "Let the people praise

Thee, O God ; let all the people praise Thee ; then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us, and ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH SHALL FEAR HIM." And we hear sounding in our ears, with all the freshness of a living command, the direction of the Christ,—“Go ye unto *all* the nations and preach the Gospel to *every creature*. Lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Our faith in the finality of the revelation of God in Christ does not stand on the shifting impulses of patriotic enthusiasm, but on the peerless values of the Ideas and Facts God has given to us in His enduring Word !

V. “But, you remind me, all that is on the point of being altered.” Easy enough it was to accept the Hebrew hope when the Bible was the only sacred book we knew, and to picture the Hindoo flinging his shastres into the Ganges, or the Chinaman preferring Christ to Confucius, so long as we were unacquainted with the character and quality of the teachings they had received from their illustrious predecessors. But that is not possible now ! We are living in the full radiance of the sacred literature of the wide earth. The “Light of Asia” shines into the far West. The ethical maxims of the Chinese Sage are put into competition with the sayings of the Great Teacher of Syria. The sacred books of the East are translated into our own tongue and expounded to our own people. Scholarship and imagination, research and poetical genius, acquaint us with the treasures accumulated by the reverent and earnest souls of the ages, who have striven to find God, to understand His relations to and His ways with men ; to obtain His favour, which is life, and His lovingkindness, which is better than life. “Wherein we greatly rejoice—though now for a little while some of us have been put to grief in manifold temptations, that the proof of our faith,” in the Bible and in the God of the Bible, “being more precious

than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"We rejoice," I say, in this modern discovery of the fellowship of hearts in thirst for the living God! and welcome with unstinted delight the opportunity of access to the purest thoughts and aspirations of our brothers of the far back ages! Fear the science of Comparative Religion! Why, you made it! Your missionaries collected the facts, your scholars massed them in order, your philosophers have expounded their significance. Carey and Ward, Moffat and Duff, Livingstone and Patteson, Hardy and Legge, have rendered possible these visions—from the housetop of our meditations—telling us to call nothing, that concerns the soul of man, common or unclean. God has not given us the spirit of *fear*. Christianity does not halt lest its advances should be creative of new difficulties. So strong is it, and so conscious of adequate resources in Him Who is its life and fulness, that in every age it has added to its difficulties with fearless faith, assured that each new peril would evoke new power, and each obstacle become the standing ground for a fresh advance.

We, therefore rejoice, in our new wealth, and welcome the most energetic competition amongst the sacred books; in obedience to the injunction of Paul—"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good;" howsoever it may reach us. For God has never left Himself without a witness amongst any peoples. Our Bible itself tells us that the Jew is not His only child. God is the Father of all races of mankind. Though Abraham is elected and lifted on high and made the vehicle of the divine teaching, Plato is not cast out, but himself taught that "the world is a created image of the eternal archetypes that dwell in the uncreated mind." Was Job a Jew? Did Melchisedek belong to the chosen race? Was Cyrus a child of the sacred people? Did not Cornelius secure the divine

favour, and yet was he not a Roman? Was not Buddha nobly unselfish and Aristides strenuously just? God is not a respecter of persons, but *in every nation*, and outside of nationalities, even amongst barbarians, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him, led by His Spirit, and saved by His love.

All men are capable of religion. The faculty is in us; part of our moral structure, as much as the eye, or the taste, or touch is of our physical nature, and waits to be evoked by external and internal influences, by the universe, by God Himself in the workings of His Spirit. God has many gospels: the gospel of falling rain and fruitful seasons for the people of Lystra: the good news of the unity of all men and of all life having its root in God, for the philosophers of Athens; the evangel of Abraham and Moses, of David and Isaiah for the sons of Israel; as well as the glad tidings of the Incarnation and the Sacrifice, the Resurrection and Ascension of the Son of Man for all men, everywhere and in all ages of the world.

Christianity afraid of Comparative Religion! Sooner let the artist be afraid of the background that makes more vivid and arresting the beautiful products of his fancy, and imparts distinctness of outline and clearness of revelation to his figures. Afraid! Sooner will a father stand in dread of the son who accepts and perfects his ideas, fills out his plans, and crowns his work. Afraid! Never! Every honest review of the whole spiritual stores of mankind can only serve to exalt the Bible to its true place as the "God of Books" by showing—

1. Its careful inclusion of all the real spiritual wealth of the revelation of God in all ages, and through all lands.
2. Its prompt and decisive exclusion of whatever affronts the balanced intelligence, pure conscience, and disciplined will of man.
3. Its undeniable uniqueness in its Ideas of God and

man, Sin and Salvation, Man, Woman and Child, the Individual and Society, Life and Immortality.

4. Its marvellous energies in the renewing and expansion of the moral, intellectual and spiritual life of mankind.

VI. If universality is the stamp of the ultimate religion, and catholicity the mark of the conquering revelation, then the "Knowledge of the Lord" imparted in our Bible must "cover the earth as the waters do the seas."

Our Bible is the Book of the great universalities—of the love of God for all men ; of the propitiation, not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world ; of the gift of the Spirit to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

As nothing is more easily demonstrated, so nothing is more striking than the "enthusiasm for humanity" that throbs and glows in our Scriptures. It is the miracle of literature that the books of the narrow, passionately bigoted, semi-civilized Jews should give the victory in every battle to a spirit so broad and free, so missionary and universal. Everywhere the revealing spirit is in conflict with the exclusive spirit of the people, battles with it from century to century, and at last triumphs over it, and constitutes them in spite of themselves a missionary nation, a people of witnesses for God, and apostles of salvation to all men. In both its parts, the older as well as the newer, it utters the missionary message, forecasts the missionary plan, executes the missionary task, and breathes the missionary spirit. As a record of religion it is itself a witness—not for a local or tribal God, but for the living and loving Father, at work—at work for all men, on and through a special race of men ; at work in Abraham and his offspring for their redemption from the divisiveness and strife of tribes and races engendered by sin. Nothing is alien to it that

is *human* ; for God revealing Himself is God seeking man as man, coming into closer acquaintance with him, winning him from his evil loves, firing him with cleansing enthusiasms, filling him with loftiest and purest ideals, and, therefore, embracing everything everywhere that is " good " and " true " and " beautiful " in every religion of man, and in every fragment of religious history ; utilizing the *facts* on which the religions of men are based, enforcing all that is true in their principles, and supplementing, as time approaches its fulness, all that is wanting in his former contributions to the needs of men, by the gift of His Son. Jesus Christ said, " I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," and He Who is the *Sun* of the Knowledge of the Lord in these Scriptures draws all *truths* to Himself, so that thereby He may draw all men. The magnet is put amongst the religious faiths of the world, and nothing is left behind that has in it the faintest trace of genuine iron.

Some unknown friend sends me the *Secular Review*. Of the many things that surprise me, one is that the editor and writers so frequently say in varying forms of speech that Christianity is not new, that some of the sayings of the Teacher are discoverable in the writings of the Greek moralists, and some of the petitions of His prayer in the devout breathings of the Rabbis, and that Christianity is thereby discredited as a revelation from God. To me such facts show that Christianity is part of the divine education of the world, that it is from the Father of all men and is meant for all men. A system of medicine that despised or ignored remedies consecrated by the use of the ages, and vindicated by their effectiveness in every country under heaven, would be sure of failure. Its originality would be its condemnation, and its exclusiveness its doom. The reformer who essays to create a totally new world, and begins by annihilating the old one, is justly met with suspicion and resistance. Christ destroys nothing good. He has not

come to abolish the laws of Moses, or the prophecies of Isaiah, in the Old Testament; the yearnings for the "Dawn," and the cry to Varuna for mercy, in the "Vedas," the faith in immortality of the Egyptian "King," and the longing for the spiritual that sobs in the "Avesta." He comes not to destroy, but to fulfil, *i.e.*, to fill out their programme, realize their ideals, take up, absorb, and use all that is wise and true and good. Not a grain of gold is lost that has ever been dug out of the mine of truth.

Does the Confucianism of the Chinese insist on morality as the highest good, and declare that apart from the ethical man can have no peace? Christ's great theme is *righteousness*. He says, "What *do* ye more than others?" "In vain ye call Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say." "Who is My mother, and my brother, and sister? Who? but those who do the will of My Father Who is in heaven." Christianity emphasises the Confucian insistence on practical morality as the secret of a blessed life, clothes it with eternal sanctions, and infuses the power for a strenuous obedience.

Does the Zoroastrian religion supply a conception of God; monotheistic, spiritual, and exalted; and set out sharply the antagonisms of good and evil? Christ is the light of the world, the revealer that the one God is the Father and Saviour of men, that the prince of this world-evil is judged and condemned, and its extinction foredoomed.

Did Buddha say—

"There is no caste in blood

Which runneth of one hue; nor caste in tears
Which trickle salt with all; neither comes man
To birth with tilka-mark stamped on the brow,
Nor sacred thread on neck."

Christ is the typical Son of God, and brother of all men. In the new nature He creates, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but "Christ is all in all."

Is it a fact that the Mohammedan reform set the people free from Arabian heathenism on the one hand, and Syrian Christian polytheism on the other, by its vehement assertion of the negation, "There is no God but Allah!" Still that is only the feeble and fragmentary echo of the older teaching that came by Moses and Isaiah, a living and personal translation of the sublime confession, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is *one* Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength." Thus—

Truth is one;

And, in all lands beneath the sun,
Whoso hath eyes to see may see
The tokens of its unity.
No scroll of creed its fulness wraps,
We trace it not by school-boy maps,
Free as the sun and air it is
Of latitudes and boundaries.
In Vedic verse, in dull Koran,
Are messages of good to man;
The angels to our Aryan sires
Talked by the earliest household fires;
The prophets of the elder day,
The slant-eyed sages of Cathay,
Read not the riddle all amiss
Of higher life envolved from this.
Nor doth it lessen what He taught,
Or make the gospel Jesus brought
Less precious, that His lips retold
Some portion of that truth of old;
Denying not the proven seers,
The tested wisdom of the years;
Confirming with His own impress
The common law of righteousness.
We search the world for truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;

And, weary-seekers of the best,
 We come back laden from our quest,
 To find that all the sages said
 Is in the Book our mothers read.
 And all our treasure of old thought
 In His harmonious fulness wrought
 Who gathers in one sheaf complete
 The scattered blades of God's sown wheat,
 The common growth that maketh good
 His all-embracing Fatherhood.*

Indeed, "every Scripture inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness" is, in pith, substance, and spirit, gathered together and preserved in this Divine library, so "that the man of God may be complete—furnished completely unto every good work."

VI. But the slightest acquaintance with the Sacred Books of the peoples will prove to us that their essential value is determined quite as much by what they reject, as by what they elect and assert. The "great renunciations" of life make or mar the individual; build up or destroy a church, a nation, a race, or a religion. The "omissions" of our Scriptures are amongst its potent arguments; its "silences" rank high in the list of its golden gifts; its grand rejections witness on many a page to its inspiration, and proclaim its superlative worth for the sons of men.

But let me carefully note at this point that we speak of the BIBLE ITSELF, and not of any human theories concerning its composition, the processes of its growth as a literature, and the relative value of its differing contents; for there are theories that imperil its broad sanity, its healthy tone, its fulness of service—theories shallow, unscientific, derived not from the Book itself, but from corrupting intrusions of Judaizing ritualism, Greek

* "Miriam," by Whittier.

philosophy, Roman law, mediæval superstition, scholastic system-builders, and priest-bitten ecclesiastics—theories that treat the description of the meanness of Jacob and the wickedness of David as an approval of sin; the speeches of Satan as the voice of God; the words of Zophar and Bildad as the sayings of Paul and John; the book of Leviticus as if it were not illumined and superseded by the letter to the Hebrews; geography and statistics as equally vital with redemption and ethics; and so cloud and obscure “the Knowledge of the Lord,” and preclude its regal influence over the minds and lives of men. But speaking of the Bible itself and comparing it with other sacred books, its universal prevalence and eternal permanence are guaranteed by its total freedom from moral and religious error; its balanced and symmetrical expressions of truth, its persistent avoidance of everything that affronts the pure thought and fully informed intelligence of men.

(1) Speaking of the Koran, Mr. Bosworth Smith says: “It teems with ideas, allusions, and even phraseology, drawn not so much from the written as from the oral Jewish law, from the traditions that grew around it, and the commentaries on it,” *i.e.*, from the Talmud, and he applies to it such terms as “inartistic, incoherent, self-contradictory, and dull,” and says that “it defies analysis.” Moreover, Dr. Percy Badger holds that “the unique interest attaching to its author is insufficient to redeem the Koran from this reproach of dulness.”

Dr. Dallinger, a trained observer and reliable witness, reports: “I have just completed a careful, and I will add, a thoughtful and earnest, reading of the twelve published volumes of that magnificent series of translations edited by Professor Max Müller, and known as the Sacred Books of the East. These are literal translations made from the sacred books of the inhabitants of India from the very earliest times, and of the inhabitants of China. Now I declare honestly and sincerely that, up to the time of

reading these books, I had a very profound respect for the religions of these people, as I supposed them to be promulgated in their sacred books. I had a reverence amounting almost to a consciousness of that which was sublime, as I thought of the intellectual endeavours of the ancient Indians, the awful intellectual struggles of those whose religious yearnings were put forth in the ancient books of India and China. Now that I have read these books, I confess to having had the utmost struggle to pass from page to page of any of them. They are actually stuffed from one end to the other with the veriest weakness. Childishness is but a noble expression to give to the largest amount of matter they contain. Their inferiority astounded me, their intellectual want was utterly a marvel. Their triviality, their utter inability to meet any of the needs of one human mind are manifest everywhere."

Next I refer, on the authority of Dr. Fairbairn, to one whom he calls a distinguished scholar, whose name is well known throughout Europe, as almost the symbol for scientific inquiries in this field. "If you want," says he, "to prove the truth, the wisdom, the sober and honest history of the Bible and the purity of its religion, place it among the sacred books of the East. In these books there are many grains of gold, but they are hid in mountains of the most extraordinary rubbish; and the extraordinary thing is, that it is the rubbish that calls forth the enthusiasm and admiration of the peoples that own them. The sobriety of the Bible, the purity of its spirit, the elevation and devotion of its tone, make it occupy an entirely unique place."

In brief, all those best able to judge, Christians and sceptics, students of literature and science, agree that our Bible holds primary rank for its successful *avoidance of triviality*, its uniform elevation of idea, uplifting expansiveness of story and song, prevailing inwardness and persistent proclamation of the supremacy of the Spiritual

and Eternal. Without controversy, it is in this respect entirely without a peer.

(2) Nor is it less remarkable that the "knowledge of the Lord" in these Scriptures is kept perfectly clear of the *taint of fatalism, whilst asserting the sovereignty of God*; and the certain, if delayed, victory of His will. The Brahman conception of Deity is little more than Herbert Spencer's Eternal indestructible energy; a Deified fate, the origin of all the forms and varieties of the forces that play in and around our life. It is the easiest conception we can form of God; flows into the mind on the streams of the forces about us; but it is inadequate, hard, innutritious, repellant, and even destructive. It is not good tidings for the meek, healing for the broken in heart, deliverance for the captive spirit burdened with the weary weight of this unintelligible world; and, therefore, it has no right to a place in human life. That omission is the mark of Divinity. Such silence is itself a victory over the false and pessimistic voices of every-day exigencies, and a convincing witness of original inspiration.

(3) Akin to the rejection of fatalism is the Bible's *triumphant renunciation of a pessimistic view of human life*. In his first sermon Buddha says, "Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, the presence of objects we hate is suffering, separation from objects we love is suffering, not to obtain what we desire is suffering, clinging to existence is suffering. Complete cessation of existence is cessation of suffering, and the eight-fold task which leads to the cessation of suffering is right belief, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavour, right memory, right imitation. This is the noble truth about suffering."

How far "the noble truth" of Sakya Mouni falls short of the gracious words which proceeded out of the mouth of the Saviour of souls, the Divine Confidant of all troubled men! Our teachers never shrink from frank recog-

nition of the worst, strongly affirm the fearful waste of sin, and the tremendous energy of the heritage of evil, picture life as a tragedy and creation as groaning for its deliverance, and yet never leave us to sorrow, as though without hope: "for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope."

Man does not need a Bible to preach to him the awful "power of circumstances," the weird and subtle wickedness of the heart, the tyranny of nature; and that he—

"If matched with symbols of immensity

Must quail, forsooth, before the quiet sea or sky."

Far other is man's want. Far other is God's gift. Eden's garden is radiant with the promise of redemption. The beauty of the rainbow arches the sky of the recently deluged land. The soul is stronger than nature. The crown is at the end of the way of the Cross.

(4) But the most distinguishing rejection characteristic of the revelation of God in Christ remains to be stated. Professor Monier Williams says:—"For myself I claim that in the discharge of my duties for about 40 years I have devoted as much time as any man living to the study of these sacred books, and I have found the one key-note, the one diapason, so to speak, of all these so-called sacred books. Whether it be the Vedas of the Brahmin, the Puranas of the Saiva, the Koran of the Mahometan, the Zenda-Vesta of the Parsee, or the Tripitaka of the Bhuddist, the one key-note, the one reference which you will find through all of them, is salvation by works. They all say salvation must be purchased, must be bought with a price; but the sole price, the sole purchase money, must be our own works and deservings."

It is the glory of our two Testaments that they escape the irritating dogma of all other religions, and show God delighting in mercy, meeting man in Christ with the gift of pardon, bringing to him, Himself rejoicing in the

splendour of His gifts, an everlasting redemption, and granting him the infinite resources of the indwelling Spirit for his war with evil, the total renovation of his nature, and the perfection of his character.

He that warreth does not entangle himself with the affairs of this life. The racer who means to be first at the goal lays aside every weight. So our Book of Religion, destined to universality, inspires and nourishes the devout life without sacrificing mental energy; shows the dominion of the perfect and absolute will without imprisoning the human soul; discovers the depths of human depravity and sin without breeding despair of reconciliation with life and destiny; stimulates and guides conduct without generating self-righteousness; and begets love and faith and hope and zeal for righteousness, without imperiling the graces of humility, meekness, patience, and gentleness. The Bible has less in it a thousand times over to repel and hinder its ascent to supremacy in the spiritual life of man than any and all the rest of the sacred books of the world.

VII. But the surest guarantee we have that "the knowledge of the Lord" in the Bible is ordained to cover the earth as the waters the sea, is in its absolutely original conception of *God*, and by consequence of the nature, value and relations of individual man; of the true meaning of life and of the conditions of social harmony and social growth.

The value of a Bible is as its idea of God. This determines all. Here is the Lydian stone of religion. The Alpha and Omega of all tests of a permanent instruction for men is, what is the character and extent of the "knowledge of the Lord" it imparts. Ideas rule the world—not to-day or to-morrow—but in the sum of things; and of all ideas none are so decisive and controlling as the ideas of God.

Think, then, of this fact. Bunsen, in his "God in History," has a chapter entitled "Was Buddha an

nition of the worst, strongly affirm the fearful waste of sin, and the tremendous energy of the heritage of evil, picture life as a tragedy and creation as groaning for its deliverance, and yet never leave us to sorrow, as though without hope: "for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope."

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It is the glory of our two Testaments that they escape the irritating dogma of all other religions, and show God delighting in mercy, meeting man in Christ with the gift of pardon, bringing to him, Himself rejoicing in the

splendour of His gifts, an everlasting redemption, and granting him the infinite resources of the indwelling Spirit for his war with evil, the total renovation of his nature, and the perfection of his character.

He that warreth does not entangle himself with the affairs of this life. The racer who means to be first at the goal lays aside every weight. So our Book of Religion, destined to universality, inspires and nourishes the devout life without sacrificing mental energy; shows the dominion of the perfect and absolute will without imprisoning the human soul; discovers the depths of human depravity and sin without breeding despair of reconciliation with life and destiny; stimulates and guides conduct without generating self-righteousness; and begets love and faith and hope and zeal for righteousness, without imperiling the graces of humility, meekness, patience, and gentleness. The Bible has less in it a thousand times over to repel and hinder its ascent to supremacy in the spiritual life of man than any and all the rest of the sacred books of the world.

VII. But the surest guarantee we have that "the knowledge of the Lord" in the Bible is ordained to cover the earth as the waters the sea, is in its absolutely original conception of *God*, and by consequence of the nature, value and relations of individual man; of the true meaning of life and of the conditions of social harmony and social growth.

The value of a Bible is as its idea of God. This determines all. Here is the Lydian stone of religion. The Alpha and Omega of all tests of a permanent instruction for men is, what is the character and extent of the "knowledge of the Lord" it imparts. Ideas rule the world—not to-day or to-morrow—but in the sum of things; and of all ideas none are so decisive and controlling as the ideas of God.

Think, then, of this fact. Bunsen, in his "God in History," has a chapter entitled "Was Buddha an

atheist?" The possibility of the question is itself a severe condemnation. The bare fact that the Three Pitakas, or Sacred Books of the Buddhists, take as their "ultimate fact the existence of the material world, and of conscious beings living within it,"* and make no response to man's quest for the Eternal, must disqualify the religion of 340,000,000 of our fellows from final dominion. A religion without God is a religion without hope; and hopelessness is first weakness, then defeat, and ultimately death.

Dr. Moffat maintains, that "the primitive religion of mankind was the worship of one God," and says "its evidences exist in the Veda, Avesta, and Shoo-King, as truly as in Genesis;"† and Professor Wilson adds, "there can be no doubt the fundamental doctrine of the Vedas is Monotheism." But it is obvious that Confucianism avoids the mysterious but irrepressible theme, confuses its theism with the worship of ancestors, and fetters and slays ethical and spiritual progress by the despotism of the dead.

According to "Schem's Statistics," there are 210,000,000 Mohammedans; and it is undeniable that the only two religions that are undermining heathenism are the religions of the Koran and the Bible, and they are alike monotheistic and missionary. Now Mohammedanism with its brief dogmatic creed concerning God completely crushed out the Agnostic religion of Guatama Buddha in the land of its birth and drove it to China, Burmah, and Ceylon for a resting place.*

But whence came the conquering energies of the Islamic monotheism? Mainly from Biblical sources. It is Semitic. That great genius and spiritual reformer, Mohammed, drank deeply at the well-spring of Revelation. The purer elements of his power are Hebraic. He

* "Buddhism," by T. W. Rhys Davids, p. 87.

† "Comparative History of Religions." Vol i., p. 199.

carried over into Islam the idea of God—Almighty, Supreme Sovereign, and Judge of man; but he emphasized the more harsh and stern elements of the earlier Hebrew conception of God, and by his energetic repetition of its negative aspects, impoverished its soul-healing force, and enfeebled its ethical strength. The God of the Jews became a fierce Arab Chieftain, sweeping with destructive might against his foes, without tenderness and without aim, other than to destroy. He is “solitary, severe, and stern;” a fighter, and not a redeemer; so that, though “the Moslem knows, as few Monotheists do, that God is one and great; he does not know, like Moses, that He is righteous, or like the Prophets, that He is Holy, or like Christ, that He is love.”† The Koran owes its spiritual wealth to Moses and Christ; its painful poverty to Mohammed and Arabia.

It is, therefore, to “the knowledge of the Lord” given to men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost we must go for our creative, all-determining, and final conception of God. Come near, then, to these Scriptures. Take off your shoes before this bush aflame with God, but ever unconsumed. God is great. God is incomprehensible. He inhabits the high and holy place. We cannot reach His throne. But He, in His gracious condescension can and will reach us, and dwell with us, if our hearts be humble and our spirits contrite. No timid agnosticism need make us halt, no idle Atheism blind our eyes. The Bible is full of Him—begins with His name and work, describes His appearing to infant man by routes which win his confidence and enlarge his life; reports His doings to the elect people as the pattern of His work in each and for all; and then completes the many-mansioned edifice of revelation by the gift of His Son; His own Son, the brightness of His glory, the

* “Missions to Moslems.”—*Andover Review*, 1888, p. 9.

† Primitive Polity of Islam.”—Prof. Fairbairn in the *Contemporary Review*, vol. xlii., p. 864.

express and indubitable image of His personality, His veritable and essential self.

Schopenhauer has rendered valuable service by forcing us to see that the fundamental thing in the universe is not Idea but Will, the Soul in movement; and our Bible warrants the addition, the Soul of all Souls in movement to redeem and renew sinful men. This is the unique and original force in the Christian revelation of God. It is a record of the successive stages in which God Himself creates a religion for His child; and therefore the "Knowledge of the Lord" is not in Idea only, or firstly; but mainly in action; for this is "LIFE eternal to *know* Thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou has sent." The Bible is God's biography; the story of His acts, His speech to Adam and Abraham, walks with Enoch and David, sermons through Noah and Elijah, glad tidings by Isaiah and Malachi, and salvation by His Son. He appears everywhere as the "*living*" God, not for a moment forgetting or forsaking man; but in action, and always in action on the plane of human life, to forgive and save. Not the faintest trace of a dead mechanical deism appears in our Scriptures. Jehovah is not the last term in a series of philosophical reasonings. He is not the idol of the intellect—but the most immediate of all realities "nearer to men than their breathing, closer than hands and feet; beating-heart to beating-heart; present to trust, and hope, and love." He lives, He loves, He hates, He renews, He rules. "I am Jehovah who *exercise* loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight saith Jehovah."

That is the highest and truest "knowledge of the Lord," the best for the mind and heart of man, and is as sure to cover the earth as the light fills and floods with radiance this June day.

(2) The great problem of all religion is to get rid of sin and bring in an everlasting righteousness, and there-

fore the *working* value in the conception of God is measurable by its attitude towards moral evil. This is the crucial test of fitness for our work-a-day suffering world, "in which we sit and hear one another groan."

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Three answers have been given to this question by the Sacred Books of the world:—(a) The first says Jehovah will be pleased with the sacrifices of priests, and the due observances of religious ceremonial, and sums up all duty in the direction—

"Work the rite as bids^d the law,

Without omission, slip, or flaw."

Pilgrimages, fastings, sacrifices, will bribe the angry God into partiality and favour, and appease His terrible wrath.

(b) The second appeals to the reason, contemplates nothing beyond human resources, and suspends the welfare of man on obedience to law. Here Stoicism and Buddhism, Confucianism and Mahommedanism, grasp hands. (c) But what is the answer of the Christian Revelation?

"The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."—"The Mussulman gains the knowledge of God," says Bosworth Smith, "but

he can hardly be said to approach Him by listening to the lofty message of God's prophet." But here God Himself comes to man; does not stand aloof to be sought for; but Himself seeks for lost man. He is the God of salvation. Deliverances to Him belong. The gift is God's. God is His gift. Man receives pardon, and his nature opens afterwards for richer and larger things. The moral ideal is associated with religious truth in the Old Testament, and the energy and inspiration that convert the ideal into actual conduct is made known in the New, and so God in the Cross makes an end of sin and brings in an everlasting righteousness.

(3) We must not forget that the word "man" shares in this noble conception of God, and becomes a larger and richer term in the religion of the Son of God than anywhere else. It includes woman. And that is one of the most signal revolutions in the thought of the world. It means boy and girl. It welcomes and embraces the babe. Alas! that childhood has had to wait till this century before it was seen! Womanhood is redeemed, exalted, and for the first time in her history ascends to her right place. Infancy is made beautiful and hallowing for ever. The weakest driven to the wall cannot be left to die in sight of the Cross of the strong Son of God. The poor, unpitied, and unhelped must be rescued, since He Who was rich became poor for them. You cannot throw away the lives of men in sight of the Divine sacrifice. *Each* soul is inviolably sacred. The meanest savage has the possibilities of an angel, and the most untutored heathen may become a partaker of the Divine nature.

Islam, we gladly acknowledge, inculcates the lower virtues, temperance, cleanliness, justice, fortitude, courage, hospitality, veracity, and resignation; but a high historical authority says—"It has consecrated slavery, it has consecrated polygamy, it has consecrated despotism." Could a heavier indictment be brought against a religion?

Islam aims a deadly blow at man in the three most important spheres of life and progress. It blights and blasts the individual; it shatters the home, and converts government into a deadly tyranny. The disciples of the Koran have great qualities. They are sober, they do not gamble, they are brave and honest, but nations are sure to decline from greatness and are doomed to irretrievable decay, who refuse to give woman her right place in the family, and in the world. The distinctive and exalting conception of woman dominant throughout the Christian Scriptures is a sure guarantee that the only ultimate religion is that of Jesus Christ; Son of God; Son of Mary; born under the law, and born of a woman; not less full of feminine grace, sweetness, and patience, than rich in masculine robustness and invincible energy.

(4) God is one, and men are *Man*. Society is the school for the individual. The individual is the servant of the whole. Perfection is only possible where the individual lives not for himself, but for all for whom Christ died. The Social Ideal enshrines and is embraced by the Individual.

I hazard nothing, therefore, when I assert that the Book that builds the "City of God" on the fullest, broadest, conception of the Eternal Father, on the extinction of sin, the salvation of little children, and the strong aid of regenerate women, is and must be pre-ordained to complete victory. "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

VIII. I can only point, in a sentence or two, and by the briefest illustration, to the unequalled sources of argumentative strength exhibited in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual achievements of this Book.

The Bible has been the quickening of the intellectual activity of all it has reached, laid the foundations of new literatures amongst barbarous and savage races, and given such

a stimulus to the reflective as well as to the moral faculties of mankind as to make it the pioneer and promoter of intellectual as well as of moral regeneration. Our early Anglo-Saxon writings carry us back to a group of industrious monks in Britain, in the forests of the Rhine, and on the banks of the Weser, translating the Revelations of God, and sowing the seeds of the knowledge of the Lord in the Saxon fields.

By these Scriptures Christ has taken possession increasingly of the THOUGHT of the world, and He will continue until philosophy has its centre in His Cross, and literature itself is brought into captivity to His benignant authority. The intellectual history of man is crystallizing more and more around ONE BOOK, and it is not the Koran of the Mahommedans, not the Avesta of the Persians, not the Bibles of the Hindoos, but it is the Word of the Lord which liveth and abideth for ever. When the earth is peopled by men of the clearest intellect, and largest intelligence, "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea."

A missionary says:—"I would that I could take you to a little village near my station, where they had embraced Christianity in a body but eight months before; and where the high priest of the temple near by came secretly to me in my tent, and asked: 'Sir, will you please impart to me the secret. What is it that makes that Bible of yours have such power over the lives of those that embrace it? Now, it is but eight months since the people joined you. Before that they were quarrelsome; they were riotous; they were lazy; they were shiftless; and now see what a difference there is in them! Now they are active, energetic, laborious; they never drink; they never quarrel. Why, sir, I joined in the persecution when they became Christians, and tried to stamp out Christianity before it gained a foothold here; but they stood firm, and now in all the region around here the people all respect

and honor them. What is it that makes the Bible have such a power over the lives of those that embrace it? Our Vedas have no such power. Please, sir, *give me the secret!* ”

We are not afraid for, or ashamed of, our Bible. It is the record of the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; it has operated mightily in the making of the most influential people of the old world; it has shared in the task of upbuilding the new world, and it is as vital and vitalizing as ever. In the battles of the Sacred Books it has gone from victory to victory, and though the ancient standard will have to be carried over many a tough field, the final issue is certain, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

IX. One mistake we must not make, for it would be fatal; that of forgetting that our faith does not rest, in its last support, upon the qualities and forces of the Scriptures, but on God, the “living” God—living when the Book is closed, acting without it and with it; “mothering” us, as James says, “by the word of truth” spoken by living and loving men. Jesus did not say to His disciples, “Go, preach to everybody, everywhere, and lo, a *book* is with you; but, lo, *I* am with you.” There! in Him! is the invincible power of the missionary.

Mahommed exalts the letter, Christ delivers from it. The Moslem is bound to the Koran. The Christian is under law to Christ Himself, and to Him only. The Arabian Reformer says the last word, and fixes the term of progress; the prophets of Israel say “other prophets will God raise up—hear them,” and Christ promised His Spirit to guide His disciples into all truth. Mahommed is sole builder of the Koran; our Bible is a library compiled by many minds and in different ages.

Christianity was missionary before it was literary. Paul was not a colporteur. He was a living epistle of Christ. It was not the Hebrew Scriptures but Christ

Himself he bore in his heart and preached to men. The Society at Jerusalem was not an organization for the distribution of Bibles: it was a Bethesda, where the halt and lame, blind and deaf, found healing and health. Emerson says "books are good when a man cannot think." Truth in regenerate men is more than truth in printed books. The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest in the kingdom of literature.

The *Book* is the life-blood of a grand succession of master-spirits, stirred to their inmost depths by the Holy Ghost, and speaking as they are thus moved; but Christ is the *Master-Spirit Himself* moving men as of old to do their work, directing their goings, and making their word to prosper. The Scriptures are the progressive revelation of truth in the world of ideas; but Christ Himself is the Source and Inspiration of present-day progress, and by His Spirit guides men into all truth still. This Bible is the record of God's word, the story of His brooding over the souls of Israel; Christ is God speaking *now*, the Holy Ghost brooding over the souls of the men to whom we go, and bringing order and beauty out of the chaos in which they are left by the old religions. In the Gospels we see Christ giving Himself on Calvary to make an end of sin, and we say, "Behold, how He loved men." In the heart we feel His actual, cleansing, and renewing spirit, and say, "He loves *me*, and gives Himself *to me*;" and so sing with St. Bernard—

"When once Thou visitest the heart,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine."

Thus, whilst our faith in the Scriptures as the final revelation of God and man rests on bases as solid as reason can define and obtain, it is made *invincible* by the witness of the heart to Christ, and the testimony the souls of men bear to His *present power* to give pardon for sin, ease to the conscience, strength to the feeble will, and life for

death. Our trust is in a living Leader ; not in a book we read, but in a Divine Person, Who *sends* us as His messengers, and sends us to His own brothers, brothers for whom He died, and for whose salvation He still lives, loves, and works. He died for all. He lives for all. His love constrains us. His compassions stir us. His inspirations fire and urge us. He is in the Bible, and with it, and works through it, and His victories will vindicate and illuminate it more than all the battles of scholars and and critics. *The Christ of to-day living amongst men, solving their problems is the living and irrefutable evidence of the truth of the Bible.* Missions will reinstate and reinforce the Book until every inch of this round earth is enriched with God's revelation.

X. With unabated faith, therefore, we take the great Missionary Book in the name of the Great Missionary Himself, Who came to seek and to save that which was, and which is, lost, assured that as He is the Brother and Redeemer of the Race, so it is the Book for the Race. He must reign and therefore it must. Not, *it* must, therefore He must. It is His reign that carries that of the Book.

The once crucified must reign. Not the Koran that denies His death, and has no room for the cross of reconciling, atoning, and self-sacrificing love. Not the good news of a living and authoritative will, preached by Mahommed, but the good tidings of an all-ruling love, constraining the Moslem to add the best of their Koran to the full and faultless revelation of the Christ. He must reign: not an agnostic, hopeless, and pessimistic Buddhism. For God has made man for Himself, and he is restless till he rests in Him. He must reign, over the millions of Hindostan, sitting in the light and warmth of this Eastern sun, and finding healing and quickening in His beams, and over the myriads of Chinese rejoicing in the access of His transforming power. He must reign.

Egypt shall surrender her "Ritual for the dead," as they shall see the immortality, of which they dreamt and guessed, brought to light with such beauty and softness as to transfigure with heavenly radiance the commonest day we live. He must reign. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust, yea, all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him. His name shall endure for ever. His name shall be continued as long as the sun. All men shall be blessed in Him. All nations shall call Him happy."

Let the "Word of the Lord" have free course and be glorified. Publish the glad tidings of salvation to all men. "*Make disciples of all the nations.*" Carry this Oriental Book back to the East from whence it came, that it may renew the decaying energies of the Eastern peoples, and open for them the gates of the kingdom of progress. "There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion; no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those that the Scriptures teach."* Make them known. Clear them of the misjudgments of system-builders. Get rid of mental timidity. Away with cowardice. Appreciate the good in all Sacred Books, and let that good pioneer the way to the Saviour. Remember the corruptions of Christianity were the opportunity of Mahommed, and still give the only chance of victory to his followers. Abolish drink trafficking. Cleanse British legislation of all share in trades that degrade and vices that destroy. Cease from miserable stingy giving. Rise to the high ideal of life offered in the Sacrifice of the Christ. Carry a full Christianity in a perfectly obedient and renewed life to the mind and heart of all men; and as sure as God is God, "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth with salvation and righteousness as the waters cover the sea."

* John Milton.

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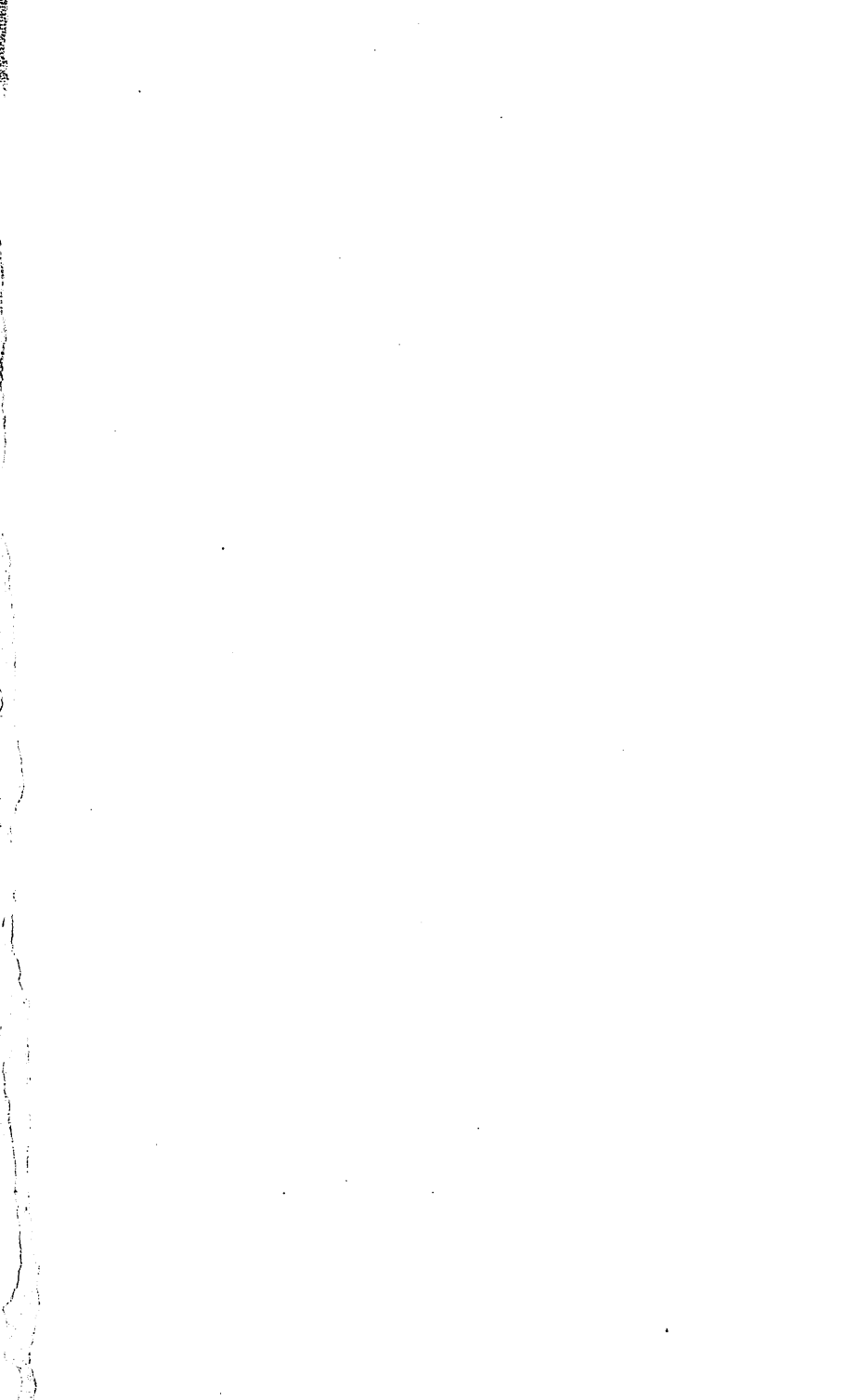
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